

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## THE ROSE AND THE KEY.

### CHAPTER LI. DOCTOR MALKIN CONFERS.

ABOUT two hours later, Maud was walking beyond the avenue, in that part of the grounds in which, some weeks before, Miss Max and old Mr. Dawe had taken a little ramble together.

Suddenly she lighted on Doctor Malkin, who was walking up the wooded path from the village. Maud saw that the quick eye of the doctor had seen her at the same moment that she saw him. He happened to be in a part of the path which makes its way through a very shadowy bit of wood, and possibly the doctor thought that he might have been unobserved, for he hesitated for a second, and she fancied was about to evade the meeting by stepping quickly among the trees. But it was only a momentary thought, for he would not of course allow the young lady to suppose that he shrank from a recognition. So, pretending to look up for a moment among the boughs of the tree under which he stood, in search of a bird or a squirrel, or some other animated illustration of that natural history which was one of his studies, he resumed his walk toward her, affecting not to see her until he had approached more nearly; then raising his hat, with a surprised smile and a deferential inclination, he quickened his pace, and, as he reached her, observed on the weather and the beauty of the tints beginning to discolour the summer foliage, and then mentioned that he fancied he saw a kite, whose scientific name he also mentioned, among the boughs of a very dark tree, a little way off, but he was not quite sure. She was taking a rather solitary walk, he observed; how very much she must miss her com-

panion in so many pleasant rambles—Miss Medwyn. What a charming old lady she is, so agreeable, and such exhilarating spirits!

There was a sort of effort and embarrassment in all this that was indefinable and unpleasant. If he had been half detected in a poaching expedition to snare the rabbits, or on any other lawless design, he could scarcely have looked more really disconcerted, and more anxious to appear at his ease.

The doctor appeared to be made up for a journey; he had a rug and a muffler for the night air, still five or six hours away, across his arm, and carried his thin umbrella, in its black shining case, in his hand, as well as a small black leather bag. A fly was to meet him at the back gate of Roydon, and wherever he was going he wished to have a word with Lady Vernon before setting out on his travels.

"Lady Vernon was a little uneasy," he said, "lest that attack of the young woman at the gate-house should turn out to be diphtheria, and I promised to see her and report, and I'm glad to say it is nothing of the kind. So, as I shan't be home till to-morrow, I thought it best to look in to-day to set Lady Vernon's mind at ease. Good-bye, Miss Vernon."

The doctor took his leave, as I have said; and Maud saw the shower of dotted sunlight as he strode on the path toward the Hall flying through the interstices of the leaves across the glazed black bag he carried, or, more softly, mottling his rug and his hat. She could not account for the slight awkwardness that seemed to affect everything he said or did during those two or three minutes, and she observed that the pale gentleman with the long upper lip and short chin, smooth and blue, smiled more than was necessary, and that the obliquity that

spoiled his really fine eyes was a good deal more marked than usual.

The doctor was soon quite beyond her ken, and pursued his way at a brisk pace to the house, where he was instantly admitted to the library.

He had thrown down his rugs and other property in the hall, and had merely his hat in his hand as he entered.

Lady Vernon got up and took his hand, and smiled faintly and wearily, and, with a little sigh, said:

"I did not think the time had arrived. I have had, as usual, some letters to write; but you are punctual."

She glanced at the old buhl French clock over the chimney-piece.

"Sit down, Doctor Malkin; I have been thinking over what I said, and I don't recollect that I have anything very particular to add. There are only two things that occur to me to say: the first is, that I have quite made up my mind upon the main point; and the second is, that it must take place immediately."

The doctor bowed, and his eyes remained fixed on the table for a minute. The lady did not speak. She was also looking down, but with a little frown, and affected to be diligently arranging her letters one over the other.

Doctor Malkin felt the obligation upon him to say something.

"It is as well often—generally—I don't see any difficulty; in fact, I know there can't be, unless it should exist *here*," he said, in a low tone, speaking by fits and starts.

"There is none," said Lady Vernon, with a little irritation in her look and tone. Perhaps she did not understand Doctor Malkin's affectation of embarrassment. "I have made a note of the day I now wish to appoint, and of my reason for greater promptitude; I thought it would be more satisfactory to you to have it in that form."

"Thanks; it is so considerate," said Doctor Malkin, taking the note she dropped before him. "I'll just, if you allow me, run my eye over it."

He opened it. It was not a very long memorandum.

"Perfectly clear," he said, when he had read it through; "and I must say, your reason appears to me a very powerful one—very."

"Mr. Pembroke Damian is a very admirable man," said the lady, after an interval of silence. "He was one of the most eloquent preachers I ever heard, and

a man whose life was more eloquent still than his preaching, and he is so able, so wise. I look upon him, taken for all in all, as one of the worthies of England."

Lady Vernon had raised her dark, cold eyes, and was looking, not indeed at the doctor, but straight before her, to the wall, as she spoke this high moral testimony.

"He certainly is a most remarkable man," said Doctor Malkin.

"He is a benefactor to the human race," said the lady. "When I think of all the suffering he has alleviated, and the despair to which he has been the instrument of admitting comfort and peace, I am justified in regarding him, as I do, as the minister and angel of heaven. I have boundless confidence in that good and able man."

Doctor Malkin acquiesced.

"And I thank Heaven there is such a person living, and in his peculiar position," continued Lady Vernon.—"Will you be so good as to give him this note."

Doctor Malkin deferentially took the letter she handed him.

"It is a very happy reflection that my confidence, inevitable as it is, should be placed in so sagacious and pious a man," she added.

"He has certainly been a useful man," said the doctor, still looking down on the envelope, with the address, the "Rev. Pembroke Damian, M.A.," &c., in the clear and graceful hand of Lady Vernon, "and a most conscientious person—a truly religious man. You, Lady Vernon, can speak with much more authority than I upon that point; and, certainly, I will say, his ideas have been in advance of his time; his has been a most influential mind, and in some points has led the opinion of his age."

"I would trust my life, as I am ready to trust that which, you will say, ought to be dearer still to me, in his hands," said Lady Vernon.

"He does not quite take the leading part he did, you know," said Doctor Malkin.

"For the last two or three years he has not done a very great deal."

"That is a rather unpleasant piece of information, you must suppose, for me," Lady Vernon said, with an angry flush. "If I did not suppose it a little exaggerated, I think I should almost hesitate."

Doctor Malkin knew that the lady wished him to understand that he had made a stupid speech. He had put his foot in it. He said hastily:

"You know he is most ably seconded. There is not a more brilliant man, perhaps,

living, as I have explained to you, and—and, of course, I don't mean that Mr. Damian has abdicated, or anything of the kind. Of course he takes a very essential part, and is, in so far as your interests and feelings are personally concerned, everything he ever was."

"I have always assumed that to be so," said Lady Vernon, severely, "and I should be obliged to you, Doctor Malkin, if you would report to me any such dereliction of duty on the part of Mr. Damian, should you find anything the least like it, which, I must tell you frankly, I can't suppose. I can't credit it, because I know so much of him; his character is so perfectly upright, and he is in all respects so consistent a Christian. I relied upon this, and upon his principal and actual responsibility."

The lady's eyes still flashed, and she spoke sharply. Doctor Malkin was therefore still uncomfortable. He saw, too late, that she possibly construed his words as casting an undesirable responsibility upon her. He hastened, therefore, to reply.

"But I am afraid, Lady Vernon, I must have failed to convey myself. My meaning was, I assure you, very far from that. On the contrary, I believe Mr. Damian was never more vigorous in mind, or active in his habits. You may make your mind perfectly easy upon that point. He deputed nothing—nothing, in fact, involving a responsibility. I'm afraid I must have expressed myself very clumsily indeed."

Lady Vernon did not care to discuss the point further.

"I need not tell you how much I have suffered," she said. "It may come, very soon, all right again. Let us hope the best. I hope, at least, it may not be very protracted. You will return to-morrow?"

"Yes, certainly; and if you please, Lady Vernon, I can call here at any hour that suits you best, after I come back, and tell you what I have done. And I don't anticipate the slightest trouble."

"It is better to come as early as you can, thank you. And there will be some trifling arrangements still to complete, which we can then talk over. You set out, I suppose, immediately on leaving this?"

"Immediately," said he. "I have a good way to go. I think I have very full instructions now. Do you recollect anything more?"

"No. The rest had better wait till to-morrow, and it is time, Doctor Malkin, I quite agree with you, that you were on your way. So I will say good-bye."

Lady Vernon gave her hand to Doctor Malkin, without a smile, and he was more than usually deferential and solemn as he took it.

At the room door, Doctor Malkin recollected his accidental meeting with Miss Vernon, and returned for a moment to mention the circumstance to Lady Vernon, as it had obliged him to allege a pretext for his visit to Roydon Hall.

"Well," said the lady, growing a little red, "I should have preferred saying nothing. But it can't be helped now. Where did you meet her?"

He told her.

She looked down in momentary misgiving—thoughtful. But she had learned that Captain Vivian, who had undoubtedly driven through the town of Roydon the evening before, had left again for the station, and had gone away by train, and she was sure to hear more particularly in the morning about his movements from Mr. Dawe, to whom she had written a very agitated letter of inquiry and alarm.

She would take her, if possible, to the Tinterns next day, and somewhere else the day following, and keep her, should any uncertainty arise, out of the way of any further meeting with that perverse gentleman.

So Lady Vernon, recollecting that the silence had been rather long, said suddenly:

"I was thinking, I may tell you, as I have taken you so unreservedly into council whether, under all circumstances, the grounds here are quite a suitable place for Maud to take these solitary walks in."

"Well, as you say Lady Mardykes' invitation was for Monday, she will be leaving this so soon, it is scarcely——"

"Well, yes; we can talk of that to-morrow, when we meet," interrupted Lady Vernon. "For the present, good-bye, Doctor Malkin."

So again giving him her hand, she and the doctor, who was not himself looking very well or very merry, made a second leave-taking, and he took his departure.

His allusion to Maud's departure on the Monday following was in the tone of her own very decided feeling.

Lady Vernon was glad that Lady Mardykes had fixed so early a day for her daughter's visit to Carsbrook.

#### CHAPTER LII. MERCY CRESWELL.

NEXT day an humble but unlooked-for visitor appeared at Roydon Hall.

Miss Vernon, on returning in the after-

noon from her short walk to inquire at the gate-house for the sick girl, encountered the slim, dark figure of Latimer, her mother's maid, in the hall.

Latimer had evidently been looking for her, for the demure angular figure which had been crossing the hall toward the drawing-room as she entered, turned sharp to the left, and approached her with a quick step, and making a little inclination before Maud, Lady Vernon's maid said, in her low, dry tones:

"Please, miss, my lady desires me to say that Mercy Creswell, which you recollect her, perhaps, in the nursery long ago, being niece of old Mrs. Creswell, that died here when you was but a child, miss, has come here to see her ladyship and you, also, if you please."

"I do remember her very well. I must have been a very little thing, Latimer, when she went away."

"About six years old you was, miss, when she left. Where will you please to see her?" replied Latimer.

"Where is she now?"

"In my lady's morning room, please, miss. But you can see her, my lady says, anywhere you please," answered Latimer.

"Then I should like to see her quietly, if you would tell her to come to my dressing-room, and tell some one to send Jones there, please, and I will go myself in two or three minutes to see her."

Latimer disappeared; and Maud in a minute more was running up the stairs to her room.

We all lean a little fondly to the recollections of childhood, especially those images of very early memory, from which chance has long widely separated us.

But Maud could not get up any great interest in this particular woman, Mercy Creswell. She was, as Maud remembered her, a red-haired, stunted, freckled girl of perhaps some sixteen years; plump, and broad, and strong, with a cunning and false gaiety in her fat face, and who laughed a great deal, not pleasantly, but rather maliciously, and at untoward times.

Maud had a remembrance of an occasional slap or pinch, now and then, slyly bestowed by this short, freckled, laughing young lady, who rather liked getting her into a scrape now and then, and who used in playful moods, when they were running about the rooms together, and no one by, to run her into a corner, hold her to the wall, and make ugly faces, with her nose almost touching Maud's, till the child

would scream with fright and anger; and then she would fall into shrieks of laughter, and hug and kiss her a little more roughly than was necessary, and after this somewhat sore and uncomfortable reconciliation, she would charge her—for the love she bore her own, own poor little Mercy Creswell, who would be sent away if she did, never more to dress her doll, or trundle her cart, or roll her ball for her—not to tell nurse, or nursery-maid, or Miss Latimer, that they had had "a falling out."

Her recollections of this early attendant and, under the rose, playmate, therefore, were not quite as sunny as they might be. Still they were connected with happier days, or what now seemed happier, than those which had come later; and perhaps if Mercy Creswell was sometimes a disagreeable companion, it was to be attributed, in great measure, to the boisterous, and sometimes mischievous, spirits of very early girlhood.

When she reached her dressing-room, Maud Vernon beheld, for the first time, for fourteen years, this same Mercy Creswell.

The interval had not improved her personal appearance. Short and square, with a very fat, and rather flat face, mottled with very large freckles, and her red hair showing under her bonnet, she might have passed for a woman of the age, at least, of Don Quixote's housekeeper. No one could have supposed that her age did not exceed thirty years. She smiled so ecstatically that she nearly shut up her cunning little eyes in rolls of fat wrinkles, while she blinked them very fast, as if tears were forcing their way from them; of which, I don't think, there was any other sign. She was not prepossessing; but Maud could not find it in her heart to repulse her when whisking aside her green veil, she rose on tip-toe, put her short arms round Maud's neck, and kissing her energetically, said:

"Ye'll excuse the liberty, Miss Maud dear, but it is such a time since your own poor little Mercy has saw'd you. La! what a beautiful young lady you have growed up since then; well, to be sure, and me as small as ever. Well, la! it is a queer world, miss. I 'a bin in many a place since Roydon nursery. La, miss! do you mind the big ball o' red leather, and the black man with the cymbals, and all the toys and trumpets, dollies and donkeys. Well, dearie me! so there was, wasn't there? La! and we was great friends,



you and me, ye'll excuse me saying so; and many a day's play together we two has had; and I thought I'd 'a heard o' you married long ago, miss, but there's time enough yet. 'Twill be a lord, nothing less, whenever he comes; bless him."

"And you, Mercy, you have not married yet?" said Maud.

"Me? La bless ye! not I, by no means, miss. Oh, la! what would I be doin' with a husband? Oh, la! no."

"Well, as you say, there is time enough, Mercy; and what have you been doing ever since?"

"La, miss! I could not answer that in a week. I was at service, after leaving here, first with Lady Mardykes."

"At Lady Mardykes? I know her. I'm sure you had a pleasant time in her house?" said Maud, eagerly.

"That it was; no pleasanter, miss; no end of great folks there, and music, and fine clothes, and all sorts, and play-acting, and dancing by night; and croquet and lawn billiards, and the like o' that, all day; or driving off, with cold luncheons, to this place or that, nothing but grand people, and all sorts of fun; high jinks, the gentlemen used to call it."

"I'm going there, to Carsbrook, on Monday next," said Maud, who was full of this visit.

"Well to be you, miss," said Mercy Creswell, looking down and coughing a little; "and I would not wonder, miss, if I was to be there myself," she added, looking up again, and screwing her mouth together, and drawing in her breath through the circular orifice, while she raised her eyebrows with a lackadaisical ogle at the window.

"Oh? Really! Well, mind you must make me out if you should," said Maud, gaily.

"I'll be sure to," she answered, with one of her sly giggles.

"It is a great black-and-white house, very large, ain't it?" said Maud, smiling.

"La! How did ye find that out?" Mercy Creswell continued, with the same irrepressible giggle.

"You see I know more about it than you fancied," continued Maud. "It is three stories high, and close under the windows there is an old-fashioned flower-garden, with the croquet ground in the middle, and the lawn billiards and all that, and an old mulberry-tree growing in the middle of it; and it is surrounded on three sides by a tall hedge clipped like a wall,

with here and there an arch cut through it, something like the yew cloisters behind the shield-room here, only very much larger."

"Why, you must 'a bin there, miss," her visitor cried, half stifled with laughter.

"No, never; and there are ever so many bedrooms, and more guests generally than you could number—all kinds of great, and wise, and clever, and famous people."

As Maud proceeded, her short, fat visitor in her shawl and big bonnet was actually obliged to get up and stump about the room, so extravagant her laughter by degrees became.

"You see I know something about it," continued Maud, laughing also. "As you used to say to me, long ago, a little bird told me. But I shall soon be there, I hope, to see for myself; and I believe every one is made to feel quite at home there immediately; and it is such a hospitable house, every one says. Your only difficulty is, how to get away; and, by-the-bye, do you know Doctor Antomarchi?"

"I 'a heard of him once or twice," screamed Mercy Creswell, almost suffocated with laughter.

"Now listen to me. We have laughed enough," said Maud. "You mustn't laugh. I can't get you to tell me anything; you do nothing but laugh; and I really wished so much to hear about him. I and Miss Medwyn saw him at the Wymering ball, and we were both so curious. Can you tell me anything about him?"

"Not I, miss."

"Well, if you like, Jones shall make you a wager that he will be there at the same time," continued the young lady, a little puzzled by her fat friend's irrepressible and continued screams of laughter, and beginning to feel the infection a little more herself; "and the Spanish ambassador; he will be there also."

"Oh! Oh, la! Oh, miss, stop! Oh, oh, oh, you're a killing of me. I'm—I'm—I'm not able to—to—oh, la! ha, ha, ha! catch my breath." And fat Mercy Creswell, clinging to the corner of a wardrobe, actually shook with laughter till tears rolled plentifully down her big cheeks; and Maud, and her maid Jones, who was nevertheless disgusted by the vulgar familiarity and noise of the clumsy Miss Creswell, were drawn in in spite of themselves, and joined at last vehemently and hilariously in the chorus.

"Well, don't mind me," at last sobbed Miss Creswell, recovering slowly, "I always

was one, oh, ho, ho! that laughs at nothing. I do; I'm as tired now, my dear—oh, ho, ho!—as if I ran up to the top o' the fells of Golden Friars, and la! but that's high enough; but how did you hear all about it, so exact, Miss Maud dear; where in the world——”

“I may as well tell you, then,” she answered, also recovering. “I heard everything about it from Miss Medwyn; you must remember her very well. She has been there very often, and she, I know, will be staying there at the same time that I am.”

But at this moment Miss Mercy experienced another relapse, nearly as long and violent, every now and then, half-articulately, blurring out, in sobs and gasps amidst the screaming roulades of her laughter: “Oh la! ha, ha! Miss Med—Med—oh, ho! ho!—Medwyn—la! ha, ha, ha! She's so staid, she is—she's so nice. La! ha, ha, ha!” and so on.

When at length a lull came, Miss Vernon, who was protected by its impertinence from any tendency to join in this last explosion of her old under-nursery-maid's merriment, said gravely:

“Mamma has not been very well; she has been complaining of headache; and I think we are making a good deal of noise. I don't know how far off it may be heard.”

“Well, dear Miss Maud, I hope you ain't offended, miss; but, dearie me, I could not but laugh a bit, thinking of old Miss Medwyn among all them queer dancers, and fiddlers, and princes, and play-actors, and flute-players; I hope you'll hexcuse the noise I 'a made, seein' I really could not help it, miss, by no chance. I know Lady Mardykes well; why shouldn't I, having lived in her service for a many years? and a very great lady she is, and well liked, as I well know; and her papa, Lord Warhampton, a'most the greatest man in England; no wonder she should have all the highest in the land in her house, whenever she so pleases. But, la! ha, ha, ha! It's a queer world. Who'd 'a thought. There is sich queer things happens.”

This time, her laughter was but an amused giggle, and she did not lose her command over it.

“Have you had luncheon?” inquired Maud.

“I thank you, miss, hearty, in the 'ouse-keeper's room, before I came up to see her ladyship,” answered short Miss Mercy, with a comfortable sigh, blowing her nose a little, and adjusting her big bonnet and old green veil, and smoothing her red tresses, while,

still out of breath, she tried to recover the fatigues of her long fit of laughter. “Well, Miss Maud dear, and how are ye?” inquired Mercy, suddenly returning from gay to grave.

“Oh, very well, thanks; and so are you; and you haven't married, you tell me, so you have nothing on earth to trouble you. I wish we were all like the trees, Mercy; they live very long and very happily, I dare say, longer, certainly, and more quietly than we do a great deal, and I don't hear of any marrying or giving in marriage among them.”

“Not they, not a bit; they're never married, and why should we, miss? That's a very wise saying,” acquiesced Mercy Creswell, very gravely looking at her.

“If you really think so,” said Maud, “you are a wise woman; I have been trying to convince my maid Jones, but I'm afraid she is still rather in favour of the vulgar way of thinking.”

“Well, miss, you'll not find me so. I make my own clothes, miss, and I think my own thoughts,” said Mercy, with a wise nod.

“You are a woman after my own heart then,” said Maud, gaily.

“And how are you, miss?” repeats Mercy Creswell.

“I told you I am very well, thanks,” says Maud.

“None o' them headaches you used to have when you was a little thing?”

“Oh, no! I sometimes have a little nervous pain from cold over my eye; neuralgia they call it; but that is nothing, it never continues very long.”

“It never gets *into* your eye?” asked Mercy, staring steadily and gravely at the suspected organ, and screwing her lips together uneasily all the time. “Them pains, they say, sometimes begins in the eyes, miss.”

Maud laughed.

“But Heaven only knows, as you say, miss. I dare say you are right, whatever you think; for every one knows best about their own pains. Sich is the will of Heaven—so we leave them things to wiser heads, miss, and I'm sure where you're going you'll be comfortable and amused.”

“If I'm not, Mercy, I shall be the first visitor at that pleasant house who ever had such a complaint to make.”

Mercy was suddenly very near exploding in a new fit of laughing, but she mastered it.

“Well, miss, I'll be there, I think—not unlikely,” said Mercy.

"As a servant?" asked Miss Maud.

"Well, as an attendant, I would say," answered she.

"Oh!"

"And if I am, I'll be sure, I hope, to see you, miss, if you gives permission; and I'm sure I desires nothing but your 'ealth and 'appiness, miss. Why should I? And I must be going now, Miss Maud. Good-bye to you, miss." And again, but more solemnly, the short woman extended her thick arms, and rising to her toes, kissed Miss Vernon, and with a more ceremonious politeness, took her leave of "Miss Jones," the lady's-maid, who regarded her with a refined and polite disgust.

So the squat figure of Miss Mercy Creswell disappeared, and Maud, for a time, lost sight of that uncouth reminder of old times and the Roydon nursery.

### NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

NOTHING is easier, if we are not very particular about the accuracy of our judgment, than to judge; and this holds good with respect to nations no less than to individuals. There is a tempting facility in providing oneself, so to speak, with a set of little mental pigeon-holes, in which we can stow away, neatly ticketed, our opinions concerning the several branches of the great human family. We can pull out at pleasure the puppet that represents, say a Russian, and make him dance in most approved Muscovite fashion. There can be no mistake, for is he not a Russian, and have we not had him in our catalogue, duly classed and numbered, for many a day? So with our nearer neighbours, the French. We know all about the French. A Frenchman, as everybody is aware, is a being light of heart and supple of spine, a sort of human butterfly, gay, polite, and I am afraid frivolous, all bows and grins, and good-humour. An Englishman, ah! he comes out of quite another sized pigeon-hole, and capers to a different and less lively tune. He is a grotesque and eccentric personage, who invariably realises enormous fortunes by exporting little penknives, who drinks raw rum, suffers from spleen, and has red whiskers of fabulous proportions. His wife and daughters still, in defiance of the tyranny of fashion, wear green veils and preposterous bonnets of Dunstable straw, and have front-teeth of alarming length and prominence.

The truth, often unwelcome, is, that a

clear and sharp distinction between the qualities of different nations is from its nature hopeless. We cannot draw a hard and fast line that shall rigidly separate, like a well-defined frontier, the characteristics of one group of nations from those of another. Black men and white, red men and brown, have so much in common that the points of resemblance very much outnumber those of contrast. Not only were there heroes before Agamemnon, but in far-away parts of the earth, and among races reputed barbarous, no doubt there existed in Homer's days of old as much valour, wisdom, and merciful self-restraint, as did honour to the bravest and the wisest in that memorable leaguer before Troy. Still we are not all alike, not stamped with the wearisome uniformity of so many newly-minted shillings. Men and women are really as various as the coins in some numismatist's collection, where in the same drawers lie the antique doubloon, the "broad piece," so many pieces of which buccaneering Drake brought home to Plymouth, and the glossy napoleon, where the Spanish gold ounce, or the massive mohur of Mogul coinage, jostles the oblong gold itzabues of Japan, or the queer white platinum eagles, worth ever so many roubles apiece, which bear the stamp of the Czar Nicholas. There are subtle distinctions, worth remembering, between the inhabitants of different provinces. There are more salient features in the national character of those whom alien speech and creed, whom seas and mountains, keep asunder.

There is one great difficulty which perpetually starts up in our path when we would take stock, as it were, honestly and fairly, of what belongs to our neighbours. The new-comer, whose sense of the difference between what he has left and what he has found is relatively very much keener than that of the old resident, is of necessity obliged to rely on meagre evidence. The old joke of the English traveller at Lille, who, seeing a red-haired girl from the Hôtel de la Poste come forth with lantern and a feed of oats for his horses, forthwith pencilled down in his note-book that all the women of Lille had red hair, conveyed, at any rate, a half-truth. Jones has a capital dinner at a mountain inn somewhere in Tyrol; his bill is low; the *Fraülein* kisses his hand in acknowledgment of the splendid largesse of a *zwanziger*; the comely, kind-eyed landlady helps him to buckle on his knapsack; the hearty, bluff landlord

walks half an hour beside him, over the uplands, to guide him into the right road; and ever after Jones will swear to all Little Pedlington that all Germans, and more especially Tyrolers, are angels. But what says Robinson when he gets back to Stoke Pogis? His experiences have not, perhaps, been so agreeable as those of his brother, who went further afield. It is true, no doubt, that Robinson was scandalously cheated—of one franc nine sous—at that villainous French refreshment room at the Sansnom Junction. The waiter was a rogue, the dame du comptoir not guiltless, and the sworn interpreter conveniently deaf to the complaint of the Briton. But still, my dear Robinson, fourteenpence-half-penny was no such mighty loss, and you need scarcely include the whole Gallic race in one sweeping condemnation as confounded cheats because of that peccadillo on the part of a licensed libertine in a white apron.

But the first delightful impressions after a neophyte's plunge into foreign parts, the early bloom on the peach, the dew on the rosebud, can never be replaced. It is that which makes Calais so deliciously French; Calais advisedly, for the ill-fated voyager, who first sets foot on continental earth at Boulogne, will never have photographed on his memory the same picture of French provincial life. Thackeray was right when he said that a man who wished to understand France should come to Calais in a yacht, stay for a day, and then go away for ever. The ephemeral sightseer should be an educated man, of course, well up in his Sterne, able to pass a competitive examination as to the meek Franciscan monk, and Lafleur, and the ever-ready snuff-box of the Sentimental One. He should know all about King Edward and Queen Philippa, and the picturesque hostages in clean white shirts, with halters round their aldermanic necks, who figure the most conspicuously in the local annals. He ought, also, to be tolerably well grounded in the statistics of French rural life, to be aware that the gentleman in a green coat, with a white umbrella and a straw hat, and the tiniest snipping of red ribbon at his button-hole, is a landed proprietor, mayor of his village, and member of the general council, while Jean and Pierre, whistling as they load the cart, are not hired labourers—for look at the black velvet hunting-caps they wear, and the gold watch which one of them produces from beneath his blouse—but the sons of a

farmer as rich as many who, in England, ride to hounds, and enter a horse for the Welter Stakes. Those are genuine labourers yonder in the sabots, and with blouses not so clean, and the fishermen, with gold rings in their ears, and long boots, sodden with sea-water, and the stout young woman, in the round-eared cap and the purple woollen stockings, and the postilion, limping in stiff boots, with rusty spurs and jacket, heavy with worsted fringe and crimson tassels—all these are poor enough, and, should they be ill to-morrow, have little but the hospital to break their fall into the abyss of want.

Yet this is not what Englishmen call France, not what the gentlemen from the United States—and still more the ladies—call France; not what contents the dandy, wrapped in sables, and swooping swiftly down by express from St. Petersburg, or the ardent-eyed Brazilian who jumps from the steamer's gangway on the pier at Havre, as eager to squander the heavy lump of dollars he has brought with him, as ever was one of the pirate sailors, whom Bishop Dampier tells us about, to fling away the ill-gotten cash made by shearing the Dons of their golden fleece. Paris has been pronounced, on high authority, to be France. But Paris cannot be taken in and possessed at a glance as smaller places can, and it is, or, alas! was, besides by far too cosmopolitan to offer those strongly marked national features, which the eye of a new acquaintance catches so readily. Too much friction is certain to smooth away those salient corners and sharp angles of the popular character. It is in remote regions and nooks difficult of access that the finest specimens are to be found. In hilly districts, for instance, not as yet overrun by the invading army of tourists, the natives will commonly be found to be intensely national. How very High-Dutch, by way of an example, is the sunburnt peasant of the Bavarian highlands, while in the more unfrequented cantons of Switzerland there are actually Swiss who might be esteemed worthy countrymen of the mythic Tell and the real Melcthal, bluff dalesmen utterly unlike the population of waiters and voituriers whom hasty travellers are prone to consider as representative Helvetians. Locomotion, in fact, the hurried, general, and indiscriminate rushing in shoals, wherever the steam-horse can whirl along, is an unsparing leveller of the old landmarks. Manners and customs, wants and prices, very soon become assimilated to



some uniform standard. There was no doubt a time, not so very far distant, when the differences between nations were more perceptible than they now are. Thus the Frenchman of Shakespeare is very much the same as the Frenchman of Hogarth, as the lean, keen-featured, mercurial Gaul, easily irritated, as easily appeased, of whom we used to see so much in old caricatures. There was something lovable in that obsolete Frenchman of the eighteenth century, something of chivalry withal, a faint suggestion of Don Quixote naturalised on the banks of the Seine, and with a most un-Castilian taste for dancing and fiddling. Now and then, but very seldom, we may still chance upon a survivor of this extinct generation, some spare little man, with a grey head and a long chin, who smirks and bows as if he were some Gallic Rip Van Winkle, newly awakened from a slumber that began when Louis the Fifteenth was king. So, also, with the accepted type of our own insular character. John Bull, with his top boots and flapped pockets, his sturdy self-conceit and his indomitable obstinacy, was probably no such very extravagant conception when Gilray's pencil was in savage activity. Minor copies of the great original might be seen in the boxes of every tavern, or making their way with square-toed tread along the greasy pavement of London streets. It was a time when we were blatantly and boastfully patriotic; the period of broad-brimmed, low-crowned hats, of beef, punch, and a sort of practical pharisaism which made us incessantly congratulate ourselves that we were not as the benighted foreigners were.

Thrift is so much of an heir-loom with some nations, and a prudent propensity to save is so intimately interwoven in their natures, that on this point, at any rate, there appears to be a radical difference between them and their neighbours. Perhaps of all races the most thrifty, employing the word in its true sense, are the Chinese and the Hindoos. Thrift is a word of very wide interpretation. It does not mean, as the root principle and guiding star of those whose beacon it is, mere stoical abnegation of the good things of life. The essence of true thrift is to make the most out of such material as comes to hand; to waste nothing, to toss away nothing, not to neglect what might be valuable adjuncts to the essentials of our sustenance, to be careful, thoughtful managers of whatever we have to manage.

The two great Eastern races are our masters in this respect. They have so very many mouths to feed, that they must husband all their resources. Every spoonful of rice, whether produced by the garden culture of China, or by the ruder tillage of India, is eagerly snatched at; every onion, every gourd, is pressed into the service of man. Instead of bird's-nesting, the urchins of the hamlet catch small fish, or gather roots and berries. The large and constant demand for food stimulates its supply to the highest pitch. Waste and lavishness, except on the occasion of a wedding-feast or of some red letter day in the Buddhist or Brahminical calendar, are unknown. To a Hindoo audience in particular, the parable of Dives and Lazarus would not come home as an illustration of familiar every-day life. The rich man of their experience does not care to fare sumptuously every day. He may be, and probably is, a mighty merchant prince and colossal money-lender. His villa at Garden Reach, or his mansion in Benares, very likely swarms with miscellaneous dependants, and the costliest London-made furniture may encumber his ill-arranged saloons. Yet this Baboo, who annually defrauds the Indian income-tax collectors to an extent which surpasses all the evasions of the British shuffler, and whose whim it sometimes is to offer to the upper ten hundred of local European society balls of unparalleled splendour, is anything but self-indulgent. Those who partake of his grandiose hospitality seldom care to think, in the midst of those floods of iced champagne, and tables piled with every dainty, how very sparsely and plainly their entertainer is contented to subsist. A handful of rice, and a few yards of cotton cloth, are his simple requirements in the way of food and raiment. His poorest servants and hangers-on are as delicately nourished as he, their master and lord. They have pulse and vegetable curry, a little oil wherewith to anoint themselves, a little ghee and a pinch of salt, and so has the founder of the feast. The Dives of Bengal lives almost as temperately as an anchorite. The Pole is a born prodigal. Thrift, in his eyes, is something ignoble, and saving a mark of meanness. He will feast and glitter to-day, at the risk of laying up for himself a succession of hungry and miserable morrows. But then he has hope. That bright illusive residuum at the bottom of Pandora's box of horrors has been thoroughly domiciled in poor Poland. The whole gifted nation, so clever and so

indolent, so winning of manner, and so unstable of purpose, seems always possessed by a Micawberish fancy that something delightful is about to turn up. Never mind mortgages and debt, never mind the bad husbandry that keeps the soil sterile, or the lack of forethought which fills the pastures with stunted cattle and raw-boned, ragged sheep; what matter if the peasant be over head and ears in the books of the Jewish brandy-seller, and if every roof be ruinous and every field weed-grown. Something is sure to happen. A salt mine will be found, perhaps, or a factory will be built, or a war will come that will clear off old scores, and fill our purses in some inexplicably convenient way; so let us have out the crazy old carriage, and the shaggy, half-broken horses, and drive along the sandy roads to somebody's chateau, that we may dine, and dance, and conjure dull care away by the potent charms of generous Hungarian wine, and the wild Magyar waltz. The Poland of our day must be in some respects very like the Ireland of the Edgeworths.

Perhaps the heavy Dutchman, the genuine, pipe-smoking, ponderous Hollander, so slow of speech and of thought, so voluminously attired, and with such a taste for vegetating among the flowers, and wooden lions, and gaudily painted summer-houses of the garden on the bank of a sluggish canal, may once have existed elsewhere than in the imagination of satirical novelists. But we cannot find him in the flesh, if we scour the Netherlands from Flushing to the remotest hamlet of Friesland. He and his gorgeous tulips, his fat frow, and his plump and silent daughters, have passed away like a dull dream, and the Dutchmen and Dutchwomen of the present day appear to an unprejudiced eye to be as lively, active, and well-proportioned a race as any in Europe. There are changes elsewhere. Disgusted tourists return from Ireland, grumbling at the absence of that picturesque poverty and wild spirit of fun that they had gone prepared for. Paddy, they complain, is not the tattered jester they expected him to turn out. Comfort, it seems, spoils the sparkle of the Celtic wit, and even the carmen of Dublin have lost the traditional art of keeping a strange fare in a roar of laughter by their powers of repartee. It is possible, in these degenerate days, to travel through Clare or Kerry without being much more amused than if the jaunt were made in Suffolk or Lancashire. The native drollery of the

people is fast becoming a tradition, belonging to the barbarous old times that have now happily passed away.

It is not only to the west of St. George's Channel that freedom and material prosperity prove capable, among other results, of sobering the exuberant spirits of a people. No one who knew Italy in the former epoch of division and misrule, could fail to be struck with the change that has come over the popular temper since then. The old-world Italian, the cringing, merry, affectionate fellow with whom you could never be seriously angry, be his shortcomings what they might, is likely soon to be as extinct as the dodo. His was not by any means a high standard of moral worth, but his good-nature was so genuine, and his pantomime so eloquent, that you loved him even when he cheated you. His faults, you felt, were those which were in a manner forced upon him by the abuses of the bad government under which he was reared. When every official, from the judge on the bench to the pettiest agent of the prince's little custom-house, was openly and notoriously venal, when small tyranny and vexatious restrictions made up the whole theory of government, and no business went on without bribes, and fines, and flattery, and extortion, it was not wonderful that poor Beppo should try a little trickery on his own account sometimes. All that is altered now, and Italy is united and free, and moderately thriving, but her children are perhaps not so kind or so polished as when the long columns of white-coated Austrians used to raise the dust along the Emilian Way, and when every day or two of travel brought the pilgrim face to face with the striped posts that indicated a new frontier, and a harpy host of doganieri and policemen.

The colonising instinct is often said to be one main point in which the Teutonic nations, English, Dutch, and Germans, differ from the Romanee races of Southern Europe. Yet when we consider that the Spaniards overran and repopled Mexico and Peru, and that an immense proportion of the United States, with the whole Dominion of Canada, once belonged to the French crown, the argument is hardly tenable. It would be more accurate to say that the spirit which once prompted the French and Spaniards to take possession of the waste places of the earth is worn out, or has changed its aims for others. In our own case, in spite of the steady flow of emigration from our shores to the lands of

promise that lie beyond the ocean, we are outstripped by the Germans, who pour into America in fast increasing numbers, while the Irish have learned to overcome the strong local attachment which for centuries made them as stay-at-home a people as any in Christendom. The grossest improbability that could once have been suggested was a Chinese emigration to the New World. It seemed inconceivable that a people whose civilisation was all-sufficient in its own idea, and that held foreigners and foreign countries in contempt, should suddenly begin to export labour, and that, too, in defiance of every discouragement and difficulty. The coolies who come to compete, in America and in Australia, with white workers, have merits of their own. They toil hard, are civil and intelligent subordinates, learn with surprising facility, accept low wages, and live and save where not even thrifty Hans from the Fatherland could pick up more than a bare subsistence. It seems hard on John Chinaman when wrathful mobs of Irish navvies or English gold-diggers assail his camp with stones and bludgeons, cudgel his unlucky shoulders, shear off his doomed pigtail, and drive him with ignominy from the scene of his labours, merely for the original sin of being a Chinaman. But certain ugly experiences in Java, Malacca, and Peru have proved that the convenient Chinese, like fire, is a good servant but a bad master, and that, however meekly he may begin, he grows dangerous when his yellow countrymen, affiliated to the same secret society, and with the same feline propensity to let the claws peep forth from the velvet, outnumber the white inhabitants of a country.

That mountaineers are greedy for money is a fact that few of those who have roamed among Pyrenean peaks or crossed Alpine passes will be inclined to dispute. The conditions of their existence are so severe as to palliate, if not to excuse, this excessive love of gain. To the inhabitants of the higher Alpine valleys, for example, the battle of life is no courtly tournament, but a fierce wrestle with the ever-present foes of cold and hunger. The wolf is so very near those humble doors of theirs, that we may pardon the poor herdsmen, if they show themselves somewhat grasping in their dealings with those who visit their bleak glens. Theirs is but a short summer, and a sorry harvest of dwarf oats and pigmy barley, even if the straggling corn can be persuaded to ripen at all so near to the flower-bordered edge of the great green-

blue glacier. Their cows must graze fast, and their milkmaids be active in cheese-making while the sun shines and the sweet herbage is plentiful, for always by night the warning chill is in the thin atmosphere, telling of the long dark winter soon to return. And then in comes winter, like a conquering king, with all the dread accompaniments of hail and whirlwind, with the hollow roar of the descending avalanche and the blinding fury of the tourmente, and the land is locked and silent in the bands of ice and snow. Add to this that the mountain peasant finds warm clothing and fuel both scarce and dear, that every cart-load or mule-load of firewood has to be brought with painful toil from the lower country, and all garments bought at the distant market-town, and it is no longer a source of surprise that Uri, Schwytz, and Unterwalden should have supplied the sternest and most unscrupulous mercenaries that ever fought for hire and plunder during the mediæval wars of France and Italy. The hardy hirelings from Andermatt or Grindelwald knew by bitter experience the value of lowland gold.

The national character of the Jews has unquestionably undergone more than one great change, the first of which dates from the end of the Babylonish captivity. Before that great event the Hebrew race had manifested a fickle but passionate admiration for foreigners and foreign fashions. There were Syromaniacs among the Jews of Solomon's reign, as there have been Anglomaniacs among the French. Their bravest captains disregarded the law of Moses, that they might ride to war on horseback, like the mounted chieftains of Moab and the cavalry of Egypt. All the fire of the prophetic zeal, and all the rigours of the judge, could not prevent the smoke of sacrifice from rising from the idolatrous hill-altars. It was in vain that the axe was laid to the stems of the sacred groves of Anti-Lebanon, for fresh sites were found, high up in the mountains, where the dark worship of Astarte and of Moloch, perhaps of Isis as well, might be practised under the guidance of heathen priests. There was a continual struggle between the true and staunch supporters of their forefathers' creed and the light and frivolous multitude who were drawn towards the splendid paganism that hemmed in the frontiers of Israel.

A more remarkable and enduring change than that which followed the rebuilding of the Temple has never been chronicled, with

reference to the conscience and temper of any people. Henceforth the Jew was altered indeed. The old hankering after alien ways, the old preference for innovations, had been replaced by the deepest patriotism and the most single-minded cleaving to the national religion that the world has ever seen. It was not alone the foreign faith that was abhorred, but the foreigner as well. Those grim zealots who died by their own swords in the rock fortress of Massala, first slaying their wives and children that the Romans might triumph over none but the dead, those frantic mutineers who long after the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the people, perpetrated the hideous massacre of harmless Greeks at Cyprus, seem of quite another stock from the novelty-loving Jews who, in the days of the early kings, found an indomitable zest in every new superstition from Memphis or Palmyra. Then comes yet another development of the national character, when, wearied of resistance and crushed by persecution, the Jews became what Christendom has known them, patient, shrewd, quiet traffickers, living in the midst of communities from which they were still severed by the impassable barriers of religion and of caste, useful to, but not identical with, the races that alternately tolerated and oppressed them. In a degree, but a very minor degree, the Armenian and the Parsee resemble the Jew in his more modern type. They, too, are broken nations, with a faith to which they cling tenaciously, but without a home, and they, as well as the Jews of these last days, show signs of a hearty assumption of the political nationality of the countries which permit them to take upon themselves the duties of citizenship. The Dutch or Italian speaking Jew of a hundred and seventy years since, newly re-admitted into the England from which King Edward had driven him at the request of the burghers of London, would have been incredulous of the assertion that his descendants could ever learn to look on Britain as anything but a perching place. The Parsee of Aurungebe's reign could never have dreamed that seats in the council of India, and possible baronetcies, could be offered to his remote progeny, and still less that they should be willingly accepted. The moral of the old fable has been renewed in the case of these wandering tribes, and the sunshine of prosperity has prevailed with the traveller who wrapped his cloak the tighter about him when the tempest raged the wildest.

The negro has altered less, perhaps, whether mentally or physically, within the historical epoch, than any other equally numerous section of the human race. We see his portraiture on the painted monuments of Egypt, and we recognise it at a glance. What the ancient travellers, the Greek and Arab chroniclers, found him, we find him still, with the same easy good temper, the same indolent indifference to the brain-breaking problems that rouse his white brethren to so much feverish activity, and the same childlike aptitude for being quickly elated or quickly depressed. Those who know the black man best, and who have learned to be fond of him, are often the least sanguine respecting his ultimate future. It is thrift, forethought, the power and the will to provide for the future, that are most deficient in poor Quashee's often amiable disposition. As matters unfortunately stand, the black race, diminishing but too fast even in Africa, is dwindling still more rapidly in North America, as the forthcoming census of the United States will prove with the ghastly distinctness of figures. Yet that the genuine negro, under favourable circumstances, can work, save, and prosper, the instance of Barbadoes will suffice to show.

#### MY PICTURES.

THEY gleam upon me from the silent walls.

These mute companions of my darkened life.

Within, the fitful firelight leaps and falls ;

Without, the March winds meet in stormy strife.

Over the dazzling page the strained eyes ache,

The pen drops listless from the weary hand,

The spirits of my pictures slowly wake,

And wrapt in memory's halo, round me stand.

There the wild waves crash on the rocky beach ;

I gaze upon them till I hear once more

The thunder music on the hollow reach,

E'en as we listened, lingering on the shore ;

Here, through the country hush I hear the swell,

I breathe the sea's keen breath through land-locked air,

And see the feathery spray I love so well,

Light 'mid the heather on the headland there.

That battle scene ! I recollect we bent,

To read its tale in Froissart's roll of glory ;

Gathering the bright accessories that lend

The flash and glitter to chivalric story.

There, through the bleak east wind, and London smoke,

He brought the eastern tint, the crimson quiver,

As, picturing the scenes of which he spoke,

He drew yon long low banks and mighty river.

There float the angels, each seraphic face

In calm reproving sweetness, stilling woe ;

There smile the woodland paths our steps would trace,

In the old happy time, so long ago.

And there, the yearning sorrow to beguile,

From the chill mists that round my vigil rise,

I see our boy's bright curls and joyous smile,

The wistful beauty of our girl's blue eyes.



Oh, Heaven-sent art! Death's icy shadow rests,  
 On Nature's spring-like smile and kindred love,  
 Only Art's voice its mighty power attests,  
 Still memory's pulse and memory's life to prove.  
 Yet from his pictures breathes the olden charm,  
 Speaking the bliss that was—that yet shall be,  
 When earth, and life, and grief, and loss, and harm,  
 Fade in the full glow of eternity.

### OSSIAN OR NO OSSIAN?

Was there ever such a person as Ossian, the Celtic Homer, the blind bard of the Gael, who is supposed to have lived and sung, loved and suffered, fourteen or fifteen hundred years ago? If there were no such person, are the poems attributed to him ancient or modern? And, whether ancient or modern, is there any clue to the authorship? Such are the questions which began to be asked in the literary world more than a hundred years ago, which were discussed for more than forty years with a bitterness seldom equalled in literary controversy, and which even now are involved in doubt and uncertainty. The recent publication, under the auspices of the Marquis of Bute, of a luxurious edition of these famous compositions in the original Gaelic, with a new and literal prose translation, by the Reverend Archibald Clerk, of Kilmallie, has revived the long-dormant interest in the subject. For the benefit of those readers who never heard of the acrimonious squabbles of our grandfathers over the name, genius, and authenticity of Ossian, or of those who having heard, have unconsciously allowed their judgment to be swayed by the ruthless or incredulous critics of the Johnsonian era, it may be useful to recapitulate the facts, and try to solve this literary problem with the aid of the new lights that time has thrown over it.

In the year 1759, a young gentleman, Mr. Graham, of Balgovan, afterwards the celebrated general, Lord Lynedoch, was residing at Moffat with his tutor, one James Macpherson, then in his twenty-first year. The tutor had some knowledge of the Gaelic language, and considered himself a poet, as is the habit of clever young men of literary ambition, though he was but a writer of verses which bore but small traces of poetic genius. Among the visitors to Moffat in the summer was John Home, author of the tragedy of Douglas, which held, for a considerable period, a creditable possession of the stage. He had previously enjoyed the acquaintance of Mr. Graham, and made that of his tutor on this occasion. Home had heard from Professor Adam

Ferguson, of Edinburgh, that the people of the Highlands possessed a poetry of their own, of a very high order, which had been handed down orally from generation to generation for hundreds of years. Macpherson corroborated this statement, and explained that he had a few such pieces in his possession. Mr. Home prevailed upon him, not without difficulty, to translate them into English, Macpherson refusing at first, on the plea of his literary inability to do justice to their beauty. Mr. Home took these translations back to Edinburgh, and submitted them to Professor Adam Ferguson, Doctor Robertson, the historian, and Doctor Hugh Blair, the eminent critic and divine. These gentlemen all agreed in their commendation, and expressed their surprise at the existence of such literary treasures, among a people supposed to be so unlettered as the Highlanders. Doctor Blair was more especially excited to admiration, and put himself into communication with Macpherson, urging him to note down from recitation as many of these fast-perishing poems as he could recover from the popular voice, and to translate them into English, promising that he would introduce them to the British public, with the whole weight of his influence and authority. Macpherson had published a poem of his own, entitled the Highlander, a very mediocre composition even for that age of mediocrity and false taste in poetry, and a few ballads and lyrical pieces, of which one entitled the Cave was recognised as the best. The opening stanza of this composition will be a sufficient specimen of his powers:

The wind is up, the field is bare,  
 Some hermit leads me to his cell,  
 Where Contemplation, lovely fair,  
 With blessed Content has chose to dwell.

The late Douglas Jerrold once asserted that what was called poetry was really divisible into three different kinds of composition—poetry, verse, and *worse*. Had he been called upon to pronounce judgment upon Macpherson's poems, he would have included them in the third category. Macpherson himself seems to have come to the conclusion, even at this early period of his career, that though an ardent admirer of poetry, and eminently fitted to appreciate poetry in others, he was neither a born poet nor likely to be converted into one by culture. He constantly expressed to Doctor Blair his inability to do justice to the Gaelic originals, and his doubts whether the public would receive favour-

ably any compositions in a style and on subjects so different from those of modern poetry. Ultimately, however, and mainly owing to the zeal of Doctor Blair, he undertook the task, and a few of the poems were published under Blair's auspices in the year 1760, with the title of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, translated from the Erse. The fragments were sixteen in number, and purported to be episodes of a narrative poem by Ossian, the son of Fingal, relating to the wars of that hero. The publication, owing to the great authority of Doctor Blair's name as a critic, was triumphantly received in Edinburgh, but did not excite much notice in England. Though the Edinburgh wits, philosophers, and critics, like the Lowland people generally, were not particularly well disposed towards the Highlanders, the patriotic and national spirit was sufficiently strong to induce them to look favourably upon the claim of their country to have produced a Homer. The enthusiasm ran so high in Edinburgh that Macpherson was entreated to take a journey through the Western Highlands and the Hebrides to collect materials for a complete work. He pleaded want of time and want of means. Ultimately, a liberal subscription to defray his expenses was entered into among the leading literati, lawyers, and resident nobility and gentry of Edinburgh, and he set forth upon his tour, furnished with letters of introduction to all the principal Highland proprietors and clergy. He was accompanied by a namesake, but no relative—a Mr. Macpherson, of Strathmashie—who had the reputation of being an excellent Gaelic scholar, which Macpherson himself was not, and whose assistance was considered likely to be useful.

The result of this tour, as stated by the two Macphersons, was a large collection of Gaelic poetry, much of it taken down from recitation, and much recovered in manuscript from the possession of Highland families. When Macpherson returned to Edinburgh he put himself into communication with Doctor Blair and his other friends and contributors. In a letter dated the 16th of January, 1761, he wrote to the Reverend Mr. MacLagan, of Amulree, whom he knew as the possessor of a copious manuscript collection of Gaelic poems, to announce that during his tour "he had been lucky enough to lay his hands on a pretty complete poem, and truly epic, concerning Fingal. The antiquity of

it," he said, "was easily ascertainable, and it was in his opinion not only superior to anything else in the Gaelic language, but not inferior to the more polite performances of other nations in that way." He also announced that he had thoughts of publishing the original Gaelic along with his translation, "if it would not clog the work too much, and if he could procure subscribers." Still encouraged by Doctor Blair, Macpherson completed his translation of Fingal, and proceeded with it to London to solicit the patronage of Lord Bute, the then prime minister. His lordship was not popular among the English, but he was a thorough Scot by blood, education, and spirit, and a great favourite with his own countrymen. The zeal of Macpherson gratified the powerful Scottish nobleman, and he liberally subscribed towards the expenses of the publication. The book appeared early in 1762, in English only, under the title of *Fingal, an Epic Poem, in Six Books*, composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal, translated from the Gaelic Language. Macpherson declined the publication of the Gaelic on the plea of expense, and on the ground that a sufficient number of subscribers had not entered their names to warrant him in the undertaking. In the following year he published, entirely at the expense of Lord Bute, *Temora*, with five other poems, also purporting to be from the Gaelic of Ossian.

To use the common phrase of the present day, the two works created a great "sensation," and literary society at once ranged itself into two hostile factions, prepared to do desperate battle. It was mainly in England that any doubts of their authenticity were expressed. The Scotch, and more especially the Highlanders, were unpopular. The remembrance of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 had not been greatly dimmed by time, and the people of the south too commonly looked upon those of the extreme north as little better than savages—ignorant alike of breeches, manners, and the alphabet. The country was very partially explored by strangers. The great genius of Sir Walter Scott had not arisen—a star of the first magnitude on the literary horizon—to show its beneficent light on those remote regions. The Highlands were not the resort of tourists as they are now, from all parts of the world, and the shooters of grouse and the deer-stalkers did not venture into the country in perceptible numbers. Even the Scotch of Edinburgh and Glasgow looked

upon their northern fellow-countrymen as little better than barbarians. They were reivers, cattle-dealers, highwaymen, and leviers of black-mail, for whom a short shrift and a high gallows were the appropriate doom. The Gaelic, or Erse language, as it was sometimes erroneously called, was declared by Doctor Johnson, who knew nothing about it, to be "gibberish," and in the total ignorance of the philologists of that day of the now well-ascertained fact that Gaelic is not only one of the most ancient, but one of the most beautiful and sonorous languages spoken on the globe, and of close relationship to the Sanscrit and the Hebrew, his dictatorial assertion obtained general credence. The wonder was consequently extreme that such a people should possess such a body of poetry, and from wonder the transition to doubt, to incredulity, and to antagonism, was easy and rapid.

Doctor Blair, and the believers in the authenticity of these poems, supported by a very large number of persons, who looked upon Ossian as a myth of Macpherson's invention, agreed in literary admiration of their merits. Opinion was all but unanimous that, whoever might be their author, and whatever might be their date, the poems were true poems, full of fire, pathos, and dramatic interest; different from all other poems known to the fastidious critics of the eighteenth century; different from the Greek and Roman classics; different from the earliest remnants of Anglo-Saxon romance and English ballad literature; different in style, spirit, imagery, and treatment, from anything previously known. The arguments in support of their authenticity were various. The internal evidence of their antiquity was exceedingly strong. The author or authors seemed to know nothing of cities, or of great congregations of men, except in hosts prepared for battle by land or sea. There was not the faintest trace of Grecian or Roman mythology, such as continually betrayed itself in the previous literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that in a lesser degree interfuses itself into the thought and diction of the nineteenth. There was no allusion to Judaism or Christianity, or to any form of religion, but such as was taught by the Bards and Druids of the time in which the poems purported to have been composed.

There was not the faintest symptom developing itself by accident that the poet was acquainted with southern scenery, or with the scenery of any part of the

world, except that of the wild west Highlands of Scotland, the Hebrides, and the opposite shore of Ireland. All the imagery was appropriate to those regions, and to no other; the mist upon the mountain, the blast upon the loch, or the sea, the storm amid the corries and glens of the everlasting hills, or sweeping over the wide expanse of moorland, purple with heather, or yellow with gorse. The ideas of the Supreme Being, and of the immortality of the soul, were exactly such as prevailed among the Celtic races before the introduction of Christianity, heightened and refined by the culture of the pantheistic bards, and permeated with sad, but exalted thought. The incidents were entirely consistent with the known history and traditions of the earliest ages of Britain, and their episodial treatment and allusions, often slight and unimportant in themselves, were in perfect accordance with each other, and with the main facts elsewhere related. There was not a single anachronism in thought, in style, or in statement. The fourteen centuries which had elapsed since their alleged date of production had not left a mark upon them, except such as might fairly have been attributable to the interpolation of successive reciters, or be as fairly traced to the mind of the modern translator. The poems seemed to be dug out of a remote age—veritable fossils. Over them there lay an indescribable charm of vague sublimity. They were like Glen Coe, whose name the poet assumed, as the voice of Cona, the weirdest glen in Scotland; dark, gloomy, terrific, yet with the murmur of rills and mountain streams running down into the narrow strip of plain and pathway, suggestive of gentleness, and the soft murmur and stir of human life. Independently of their origin, it was impossible for any true and conscientious critic to withhold his admiration. Even the surly Johnson, the enemy of everything that was Scotch, acknowledged that it would be "pleasing to believe that Fingal lived and that Ossian sang."

The continental critics, as soon as the poems were translated into French, Italian, German, and other European languages, were unanimous in the expression of their delight, and two great men, Napoleon Bonaparte in France, and Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of American Independence, publicly declared that they preferred Ossian to all other poetry. Napoleon always carried a copy with him in his campaigns, and Jefferson undertook

the study of Gaelic in order that he might read his favourite bard in the original. Goethe was equally charmed and captivated. The enthusiasm of the lovers of poetry—together independent of the authorship—was amply justified by the beauty of the composition, rivalling in many instances the noblest passages in the Psalms of David, the prophecies of Isaiah, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah. What, for instance, could be finer, asked the critics—and we in our day may well repeat the question—than the passage in Carthou, when the blind Ossian, attended by the lovely Malvina, the widow of his lost son Oscar, apostrophises the sun, in language of which the perfect rhythm would be marred by the useless meretriciousness of rhyme?

Oh thou that rollest above,  
Round as the shield of my fathers,  
Whence are thy beams, oh sun,  
Thine everlasting light?  
Thou comest forth in thine awful beauty,  
And the stars hide themselves in the sky.  
The moon, cold and pale,  
Sinks in the western wave;  
But thou thyself movest alone.  
Who can be a companion of thy course?  
The oaks of the mountain fall,  
The mountains themselves decay with years,  
The ocean shrinks and grows again,  
The moon herself is lost in heaven,  
But thou art for ever the same,  
Rejoicing in the brightness of thy course.  
When the world is dark with tempests,  
When thunder rolls and lightning flies,  
Thou lookest in thy beauty from the clouds,  
And laughest at the storm.  
But to Ossian thou lookest in vain.  
He beholds thy beams no more,  
Whether thy yellow hair flies in the eastern clouds,  
Or thou tremblest at the gates of the west.  
But thou art perhaps like me, but for a season,  
And thy years will have an end.  
Thou shalt sleep in thy clouds,  
Careless of the voice of the morning.  
Exult then, oh sun, in the strength of thy youth!

This passage is but one of a multitude that might be cited, yet of itself it is sufficient to prove that the author—whether he were Ossian or a man of modern time—was a true poet. Most of our books of *Elegant Extracts*, and *Selections of Poetry*, contain passages from Ossian. Every reader of taste will know where to find them.

It is proverbially impossible to prove a negative. Those who denied the authenticity and the personality of Ossian, and there are those, and they belong to a very influential school of criticism, who deny to this day the authenticity and personality of Homer, took refuge in affirmation, and maintained not only that no such poems as those attributed to Ossian ever existed in Gaelic, but that James Macpherson was

their author; or, if not wholly their author, that he linked together a few small fragments of undoubted Gaelic poetry, and made them the foundation of a greater structure, which was the work of his own mind. The merit of the poems being acknowledged, the compliment to Macpherson's genius was a very high one; but that it was wholly undeserved was evident to any one who had compared the English compositions of which Macpherson was most proud, such as the *Highlander* and the *Cave*, with the English version of Ossian, of which he never boasted. The difference between copper and gold, between glass and diamonds, between water and wine, between cold and heat, is not more obvious than that between Macpherson in his own name, as an original author, and Macpherson as the translator of Ossian.

It is possible that the controversy which the publication evoked would, after a few years, have died away, had it not been for the impetus given to it by the warm attack made, not only on Macpherson, but on all Scotsmen, by Doctor Samuel Johnson, who roundly stated, in his *Tour to the Hebrides*, "that the poems of Ossian never existed in any other form than that which we have seen (the English); that the editor or author never could show the original, nor could it be shown by any other person; that the poems were too long to be remembered; that the Gaelic was formerly an unwritten language; that Macpherson doubtless inserted names that circulated in popular stories; that he might have translated some wandering ballads, if any such could be found; and that, though some men of undoubted integrity professed to have heard parts of the poems, they had all heard them in their boyhood, and none of them could recollect or recite as many as six lines." He added, with his usual venomous, though amusing, prejudice against the Scottish people, "that though the Scots had something to plead for their easy reception of an improbable fiction, they were seduced by their fondness for their supposed ancestors. A Scotchman," he said, "must be a very sturdy moralist who does not love Scotland better than truth; he will always love it better than inquiry; and if falsehood flatters his vanity, he will not be very diligent to detect it." Macpherson's reply to this insolent attack was a challenge to fight a duel, which the unwieldy lexicographer thought it prudent to decline. The reply of the Scottish literati who believed in Ossian, and of the High-



landers generally, was more satisfactory. Macpherson's alleged inability to exhibit the original Gaelic was disposed of by the fact that he had left the manuscripts for several months at the shop of Mr. Becket, the publisher in Edinburgh, to be shown to all inquirers, and especially to such as were desirous to subscribe for their publication; that few persons looked at them, and fewer still subscribed; that as to there being no one in the Highlands who could recite six lines of Gaelic poetry, there were many then living who could repeat six hundred or a thousand lines, and that one gentleman, the Reverend Doctor Macqueen, had procured from Alexander Macpherson, in Skye, a person known for his great memory as a reciter of Ossian, a quarto manuscript, an inch and a quarter in thickness, known as the *Leabhar Dearg*, or Red Book, which contained a portion of the story of Fingal, which book was handed to James Macpherson, and was translated by him. In short, a whole cloud of witnesses appeared to rebut the charges, including persons who could recite long detached passages of the poems in the original language, and Gaelic scholars who brought forward manuscript copies, which had long been in their families, of parts of the poems. Ultimately the Highland Society of London sanctioned and aided the publication of the Gaelic text, with a Latin translation by the Reverend Robert Macfarlane, in three quarto volumes. To this publication the celebrated Sir John Sinclair contributed an exhaustive introduction, in which he related the whole history of the sources whence the Gaelic poems were derived. This work did not appear until the year 1807, and if Doctor Johnson, the great opponent of the Celtic claim to the possession of a Homer, had survived so long, there was evidence to convince even him of the error into which his prejudice had led him, if not gracefully to acknowledge it.

In short, every argument that was, or may be still, urged against the authenticity of Ossian's poems, may be used against the authenticity of Homer's, or any other book that has descended to the world from remote antiquity. Ossian may never have existed. Ossian's poems, as now extant in Gaelic, may not be verbally, or, in every respect, the same as the poems which proceeded from Ossian's mind, if we go so far as to admit Ossian's existence. Some of the poems may not have been Ossian's at all, and successive bards in successive ages may have imprinted their own charac-

teristics upon the ancient compositions, which they recited for the delight of their auditors in the days when there were no books. But exactly the same may be said of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. If it be impossible to prove the existence of Ossian, it is equally impossible to prove that Homer was not a myth. And whether Ossian or Homer ever lived and sung, it is alike certain that the Gael and the Greeks produced the poems which have been attributed, truly or falsely, to those real or imaginary authors. A question of literary identity, that goes back for centuries anterior to the invention of printing, can never be authoritatively settled, so as to leave no room for denial or incredulity. And as regards Ossian, whoever he may or may not have been, one thing is all but certain—his poems were not, as Johnson and the English critics of the eighteenth century took a malicious delight in asserting, the works of James Macpherson. They were known, in scattered and multifarious fragments, long before he was born, and, though he understood Gaelic sufficiently to be able to translate it into English, he was not only incapable of writing good Gaelic, but of writing in English such poetry as is contained in the epic story of Fingal, and in the minor and perhaps more beautiful stories of Carthon and Temora. Though his translation, on the whole, is spirited and vivid, it is not always correct, and in numberless instances does injustice to the original. Macpherson at his death bequeathed a thousand pounds for the publication of the Gaelic, and, thanks to the learning, zeal, and energy of successive editors, among whom the last, the Reverend Mr. Clerk, is not the least eminent, the text has been finally settled, to the satisfaction of Gaelic scholars, and remains an imperishable monument of the genius of the Celtic people.

One assertion of the disbelievers in Ossian remains to be considered, namely, that, beyond a few undoubted Gaelic fragments that were current among the people of the Highlands before the birth of Macpherson, all the rest of the poems were translated from Macpherson's English, after the publication of Doctor Blair's treatise. To a certain extent the charge is true, for Macpherson undoubtedly pieced his fragments together, and could not exhibit the Gaelic for every line in his book. But this being granted, the poems of Ossian still remain as much Ossian's as the *Iliad* is Homer's; for in the days succeeding

those of Homer exactly the same process of preservation and, if a part were lost, of renovation and completion, must have been adopted by the successive reciters by whom the poems, as we now possess them, were handed down, till they were finally fixed in the form of an authentic manuscript. The only real question in our day is as to the more or less of Macphersonism that Macpherson inserted into the ancient poems. This point can never be satisfactorily settled; but from all that is known, and that is every day elicited by the Gaelic critics, who are alone competent to pass an opinion, it appears to be clear that whenever Macpherson meddled he muddled, and that the finest passages are of undoubted antiquity, and if not the composition of Ossian, of some other bard or bards as worthy as he to rank among great poets.

#### COLONIAL LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

AFRICA is not all sand and lions, nor do serpents and cannibals constitute the major part of its population. My surprise was great on first coming to Natal en route to the diamond country to find it greener than even the Emerald Isle. It lies before me now as I write, rolling wave after wave of green—every shade of green, too; not mere young corn-fields or monotonous meadows. Here the cane-brakes, there the spring pastures; in the distance rise the coffee-bushes and the great, broad, flapping, split-leaved bananas, so generous in their lavish growth.

Natal is the very garden of Pomona. Oranges and limes roll about in green and golden profusion. The finest pine-apples, worth ever so much money in Covent Garden, sell here at a penny each, and there is a reduction to the greedy epicure who takes a quantity. The only true way to eat a pine-apple is to take one into a quiet, shady, unobserved corner, like that selfish and contemptible individual, little Jack Horner, and then and there to scoop it out like an egg, all by yourself, not giving even your nearest relation a bit. The result is paradisiacal, for the aroma is worthy of the fruit of Eden. Oranges sell at from one and sixpence to two shillings a hundred; however, residents seldom buy such things, but send empty baskets to their friends' gardens to be filled, for the friends are grateful to be relieved of their overflowing treasure. Fruit is, nevertheless, almost an essential of life in Southern Africa, for scurvy is common among the new settlers,

and this disagreeable disease is best exorcised by a liberal use of vegetables, fruit, and lemonade, the proper diet of the country. If hardy Norsemen will come to Africa, and there continue the potatoes useful, or at least harmless, in the cold misty North, they must take the consequence and pay the damages. Indian corn, a staple in America, and most delicious of all grain when prepared in the Indian way as hominy, is imported in large quantities into Natal, and there given as the universal food to the Kaffre labourers, also to man's humbler Darwinian kinsmen, the horses, pigs, and fowls. The cobs of the young green maize, most admirable and nutritious of vegetables, is preferred to bread by the Anglo-African children. The sweet potato (something between a parsnip and a waxy potato) is much cultivated at Natal, and, being cheap and decidedly filling, it is a useful vegetable for a thrifty household.

The climate of the South of Africa is not so hot as the poets make it. It is neither liquid fire, nor quite glass-house heat. On the contrary, it is steady, bright, and sunny, and not at all too warm for Anglo-Indians, whose blood has once been up at the top of the thermometer. People at Natal like nothing under seventy-five degrees. In summer we range between seventy degrees and eighty degrees, very rarely rising to ninety; and the mornings and evenings are so agreeably fresh and cool, that we never feel the prostrating lassitude that one experiences in hot, close weather in a stivy English town. The atmosphere is always deliciously pure, and the sky deeply and intensely blue. Heaven seems further off here than in England, and its outer court more beautiful and vast. Christmas weather is generally extremely hot. Sitting with fruit before us, we fan ourselves, and think of our dear friends in merry old England, wrapped up to the nose, and busy at their roast beef and terrible national pudding. Patriotism apart, and coaxed immediately after a heavy national dinner, I think many a John Bull would be glad to exchange his English beef and fog for African sunshine and bananas. The African winter is delightful, not unlike a fine warm English May, no rain to pour or drizzle, no gusts of bronchitis, no grey leaden clouds, but a cloudless, laughing sky, and the most lovely moonlight nights. Moreover, the moon is twice as large as the moon in England, and three times as bright. The African winter day is about two hours shorter than the summer day, that is, the sun sets in winter at five

A.M., and in summer at seven o'clock. A cheerful blazing wood fire, on an African winter evening, is cosy, and not to be despised, especially when one can sit over it and read long letters just arrived from England. Some of the Natal houses have no fire-places, but this is a lamentable mistake, and sometimes drives chilly tenants to the Cognac bottle. The great rains fall in summer, and are welcomed especially by the cotton farmers and coffee planters, as the crops then leap up as if by magic. These rains temper the otherwise great heat, and refreshingly cool the air. My farm bailiff in Surrey used to say, that if he superintended the weather office he would make all the rain fall on Sunday. Nature here, though less severe on the poor man's holiday, is quite as methodical, for it generally rains during an African summer two or three times a week, and generally in the evening or night, so that it neither interferes with business nor pleasure.

The soil at Natal is as rich as if it had been lying fallow since the Deluge, which indeed much of it has. We can get two crops a year from the same field. Potatoes put forth their nightshade (purple and yellow) blossom, fade, and quickly develop their clean-looking tubers. Indian corn shoots up rank and cane-like, and soon the great bunchy beaded cobs ripen and turn golden. We then hoe the ground over and plant oats. These we do not allow to ripen, but cut them green, and sell them at a remunerative price as forage for horses. Pigs and poultry thrive at Natal, though the latter are subject to epidemics, difficult to cure, the cause of which is as yet uncertain. Disease is also common among the Anglo-African oxen and horses. The general opinion, however, of the older settlers is, that these ailments chiefly arise from the carelessness, and recklessness, and ignorance of the lower class of settlers.

Let me describe Durban, the town where we live. Durban is situated on the banks of a large bay, about two miles from its narrow entrance, called the Point, where the vessels lie. There is a bold headland opposite the Point called the Bluff, and on it is a lighthouse. We had heard a good deal during our voyage out of the horrors of the bar, but the day we arrived it was as smooth as a lake, in fact there was no bar visible at all, so our good ship was at once towed safely in to her anchorage. In summer the bay looks very cheerful, dotted over as it is with yachts: there are frequent regattas, and great excitement prevails amongst the boating and betting

men. The beach round the bay is a pleasant ride. Strangers are surprised to see so many equestrians cantering about in every direction, for every one in Natal rides, after a fashion, and it speaks volumes for the horses that there are no accidents. Horses are indeed very cheap, especially since the exodus to the diamond fields, and their feeding is a trifle. Your Kaffre cuts the grass every day, and a feed of maize keeps the horse in good condition. The sand is too heavy for walking (at least so Durban people say); people, therefore, ride the shortest distances. There are races every year; and the South African colonist need not be dull. A fancy little railway runs from the Point to Durban. It is as unlike an English railway as it can well be, for there are no accidents and it pays good dividends. Durban is rather a foreign-looking little town, for the coolies help to give it an Oriental look with their gay clothing of many colours. The Kaffres, duskier and taller, are a powerful race of men.

The lumbering African waggon, with its team of oxen, surprises the new comer, and rouses thoughts of strange travel. Trees shade either side of the principal street, and there are excellent shops where you can procure necessities and luxuries. The latest fashions come out to Natal, so the South African is only two months behind London and Paris. The houses are all built with verandahs, which are very cool and useful, affording an additional half-open room on a warm day. There is an excellent hotel in Durban, and the charges are very moderate. Breakfast, tiffin, and dinner, consisting of fish, soup, meat, curries, puddings, and fruit, cost at the hotel only six or seven shillings a day, including lodging. There is also a good club. Fish is very plentiful and cheap. Beef fourpence a pound; mutton, sixpence; coffee, one shilling; sugar very cheap; tea comes from the Cape and Australia; flour is one pound at present for the hundred-weight. Beyond Durban extends the flat, about a mile across; then comes the Beren, where many of the merchants and others employed during the day in town reside. This is a hill, covered with the luxuriant growth of trees, underwood, and flowering shrubs, called in Natal "bush." There is a church here, where the service is carefully performed. Paths intersect the Beren in every direction, and villas and cottages peep out, each with a garden more or less extensive. Some of these houses have magnificent views in front, looking down on the thick bush, with

its varied tints, and over the flat and the town, to the wide blue expanse of the Indian Ocean, and in the other direction to the beautiful valley of the Ilengeni river, while in the far distance the Jesanda mountains show purple against the sky, with their table-like flat tops reminding one of the Abyssinian hills. The Kaffres do all the laborious work of a house; chop wood, which costs nothing on the coast, go messages, and make themselves "generally useful." They would become good servants, but are too often spoiled by the class of settlers who at home would be servants themselves. These new comers treat the Kaffre one day with familiarity, and the next with harshness; consequently many of the natives become rude in their bearing, if they think they can safely venture on being so. The best way is to get raw, untrained Kaffres from their kraals, and train them into habits of respect and obedience. Kaffres get through a good day's work with a white man to superintend them. Their wages are from eight shillings to twelve shillings per month. They do not remain long in your service at one time, say nine months or a year; then they pack up and go back to their kraals, to see how things are going on, and spend a holiday with their wives and children. If you are a good master they will after that return to you and work for another spell. You do not see Kaffre girls in the town, but you meet them sometimes in the suburban roads. They are well made and shapely, with a good erect carriage, and by no means bad features; but the Kaffre maid-servant looks a terrible awkward shambling Topsy in European dress, and very unlike the graceful robed coolie women.

There is a very pretty little town where the governor resides with all the officials. The streets are wide, and shaded by seringatrees. The band of the regiment stationed in Natal plays once a week on the promenade. There is a great deal of business done in Maritzburgh with the Dutch from the Transvaal. People at home know very little of the divisions of the African colonies, and think that the old Cape colonies, Port Elizabeth and Natal, are all one. Natal people, however, don't like to be asked in letters from home, "Are you going to the Cape to look for diamonds?" The diamonds are as near Natal as the Cape, perhaps nearer. It is a point in dispute, and Natal, at all events, is not in the Cape Colony at all. It is a compact little state of itself, with its own governor, judges, secretaries, place-hunters, and bishops.

Rapid travellers writing skimming tours, and taking stock of half the globe, come out to Natal, race from the Hotel at Durban to the one at Maritzburgh, collect a few imperfectly digested facts, spin a theory or two, contrast us with the Cape, never go into a sugar-mill, never visit a coffee plantation, do not even ride through the Beren, then fly home and write an elaborate account of the colony, and an accurate photograph it generally proves to be!

## TWO SIDES OF A STORY.

### NED'S SECOND CHAPTER. CHANGES.

AFTER that things went on much as usual, except that Gretchen and I were happy in the security of our love. We said nothing to any one of the plight that had passed between us. The only difference was that I resolved boldly to attempt to make myself known to Mr. Fairfax. I learned that he was frequently sober, and often at such times was quite mild, and even good natured. I watched my opportunities, and picked up an acquaintance with him in his more self-respecting moments. I found him agreeable in his manners, polite, and well informed; but I also readily perceived that he was greedy and unprincipled. He had a handsome beard and a graceful cast of features, and had he been suitably clothed would have looked perfectly the fine gentleman. I succeeded so far in winning his goodwill, that I came and went at the cottage when and how I pleased.

Very seldom, indeed, did I find him about the place. Often he had not been seen there for a day, or for many days. If Gretchen forbore to tell me of this, Kitty was sure to announce it. Yet, in spite of all drawbacks, these visits of mine were occasions of high jubilee. I always found the three little sisters awaiting me in their trimmest order, though, sometimes, there were but two sisters, for Kitty, like her father, was a rover.

There was a certain Lady Bernard, who was a very rich old woman, and she had taken a fancy to Kitty, and would give her money and presents, and take her to drive with her in her carriage. She would have her very often to spend a day with her, to sing and dance, and act parts for her amusement. For Kitty had a fine voice, and was a capital mimic. Often when I was leaving the cottage of an evening I met Kitty returning home, attended by Lady Bernard's own maid. On these occasions Kitty held her head very high, and hardly saluted me. And if she came a



little earlier she ridiculed our supper-table, telling us with a great air of Lady Bernard's style of living. Sometimes she had an apple, or a handful of bon-bons for Fan, and then the little one was so charmed that I almost forgave Kitty her selfishness and her scornful want of tact. It took almost all Kitty's time, while she was not at Lady Bernard's, to make ready for the next occasion, when she should be summoned to the side of her patroness. She employed herself generally in ripping and sewing, cutting and settling old remnants of finery which Lady Bernard bestowed on her. She had a wonderful taste for a fantastic sort of dress-making, and to see Kitty setting out for Lady Bernard's, arranged in a costume of her own curious design, was to see a picture; not a picture of as high a class as my Gretchen in her dingy gown, but still a brilliant little picture, full of life and grace.

Sometimes of a morning I called for Gretchen, and found her gone to work before me. Then I generally beheld Kitty as I approached the cottage, seated in the window at her dress-making, with the curtain put aside, so that she might see and be seen by the people on the road. At such times Fan was moving about the place like a tiny household fairy. Mounted on a stool, so as to have command of the table, she shred the vegetables for the dinner, or she was sweeping the floor, or arranging the cupboards. She was a slender little creature, who looked as if you could blow her off your hand, but with spirit enough for a giant stirring in her great brown eyes. Gretchen was the little creature's idol. She would work like a busy bee all day long that Gretchen might have some comfort in the evening. Never was there a stronger human tie than was knit between these two little sisters of seven and seventeen.

It was some time before I was sharp enough to perceive that Fan was one of those tender human flowers that, though exquisite in their promise, never get past the bud. I had thought that as a matter of course she would grow up into girlhood, just as Gretchen had done, and Kitty. But little Fan was never born to be a woman.

"Oh, Kitty, do come and help me with this saucepan!" I heard her cry one morning as I came into the cottage.

"You tiresome little monkey!" was the answer. "Why don't you grow big?"

"I think the pain in my side will never let me grow big."

Fan's grave answer came with a child's sigh to me through the half-closed door.

"Don't be a goose!" said Kitty. "It's only indigestion. Whenever I eat venison at Lady Bernard's I get a pain just like that. Lady Bernard only laughs, and says it's indigestion."

And Kitty shook out some trimmings and gave all her attention to them.

"But I never tasted venison in my life, Kitty dear."

I entered and interrupted the conversation. Fan was standing gazing at her saucepan, with her small hand pressed against her side, and a look of patient pain upon her childish face. I think I knew from that moment about the end of little Fan. She flew to my side. Her head was scarcely higher than the level of my hand, and she had a trick of kissing my hand by way of greeting.

I watched her very closely after this, and was prepared for Gretchen's anguish when the truth first broke upon her.

"Ned," she said one day as we walked home together, "Ned, I want to speak to you. Fan——"

Her voice broke and she turned away her head.

"What is it?" I said, but I knew all about it very well. She struggled in silence awhile, and then gathered up her strength.

"Oh, Ned, Fan is going to die!"

"I trust not," I said, but I knew that I was a hypocrite when I said it. For Fan was fading away from us like a snow-drop in the sun.

Then we had pinching and saving to make up enough money to bring Fan to a famous doctor. The doctor shook his head and suggested the South of France. So we threw away our guineas, and brought the little patient home again to wrestle awhile for life.

It took her a whole year to die. During that time Gretchen was scarcely seen in our workroom. I carried her work to her, and brought it home when it was finished. Kitty was a bad nurse, and could not be relied upon. Almost all my evenings were spent at the cottage. Mr. Fairfax was seldom there, and, when there, he moaned perpetually over the troubles of his family. One would have thought to hear him that he had been a tender and industrious father, whose efforts were defeated by the unkindness of the world. He spent his days in gambling, and I knew that Gretchen shrank from taking the few odd coins which he gave her from time to time towards the

housekeeping. He was always glad to see me, and to borrow what little moneys I might chance to have about me. And this was a misfortune, for all my odd shillings were kept for dainties for Fan. When Mr. Fairfax got possession of them they were heard of never more.

It was during this year of Fan's dying that my very odd relative, whom I have spoken of before, sent for me to visit him, in a very formal manner. The event took me by surprise, as for a very long time he had not taken any notice of me. I went to dine with him, as I was bidden, upon a certain Wednesday, and the day was in itself worthy of note, as I never before had visited him, but on a Sunday, in my life. On former occasions he and I had been tête-à-tête, but now the dinner was a banquet, and the company very large. I felt rather out of place in my shabby undress coat. My relative smiled on me, however, and gave me a seat by his side. When the company were going he pressed me to remain.

When all had disappeared he drew his chair to the fireside, and bade me to do the same.

"Tell me," he said, "how do you think I am looking?"

"Only pretty well I think, sir," I said.

"That's an honest man. Yonder scoundrels all swore I never looked better in my life. But I am not even pretty well, so I am going to make my will."

"I hope you will live long to enjoy everything you have," I said.

"Well, you needn't; for I am not going to do anything of the kind. I tell you again that I am going to make my will."

"Are you, sir?" I said.

"Yes, I am, sir. And that's the fact that I want to bring before you. I have enjoyed my wealth well, but I have never squandered it, and I have got to leave it behind me. It is no mean inheritance. What I want to know is, am I to leave it to you or not?"

"Oh, sir!" was all I could articulate. A crowd of delightful ideas went whirling through my head. Gretchen—a wedding—Fan—the South of France. Good-bye to the wretched cottage and Mr. Fairfax. "Oh, sir!" I faltered, "do not tantalize me."

"Don't run too fast," he said, dryly; "there is a condition, I must tell you."

"A condition, sir?" What is it?" I felt ready to promise anything, possible or impossible.

"Only this," he said, "you are to swear never to marry. I will not have my money squandered by a woman. If you agree to my condition you shall have all that I possess. If you will not agree to it you shall have nothing."

I turned sick and dizzy. For a moment I pictured myself a rich man without Gretchen. But no; life without Gretchen would be like sand in a hungry mouth.

"Think well of it, young man!"

"I could not give her up, sir."

"Her? Is there a 'her' in the case already? Then that settles the matter. The money must go to the other one. How old are you, young man?"

"I am going on for twenty."

"And the other one is going on for fifty, I should think. If he has lived all this time without being so foolish as to marry, he deserves his good fortune, as you deserve your ill luck."

I knew very well who was meant by the "other one." He was a Sutherland by name, though no nearer by blood to my relative than I. He was the scamp of the family, and early in life had committed a fraud on account of which he had had to run away from England. He had not been heard of for years, and seemed to have dropped out of the world. But my odd old gentleman had never forgotten his existence, and it was from my guardian's conversation that I knew that this Sutherland had been born, had misbehaved, and had not yet died. Where he was, and how he lived, nobody seemed to know.

"The chances are against him," the old gentleman went on, "and there is still a hope for you. If he be married he gets nothing, and I never yet knew a ne'er-do-well who had not a wife and twenty children. He shall be sought for when I am gone, and if found to be a bachelor he is my heir. If it be proved that he is dead, or that he ever had a wife, then you are to get everything I have. Now good-night, young man, and I am sorry you are a fool!"

I did not tell Gretchen quite the truth about this affair. I told her my guardian's fortune was to go to a distant relation, of whom no one knew anything. I told her the conditions of his heirship, and of my chances in the matter. Many a time we laughed and speculated on the subject. Fan, on her sick-bed, amused herself building castles in the air. She prattled of it so often that her father overheard her.

"What is this fortune that you are

getting?" he said to me one evening, when I had met him, quite sober, on the road. "What does it mean?"

"Not much," I said, and told him the state of affairs. But I did not mention Gretchen. I had not chosen to promise against marriage, that was all.

"You are a fool!" he said, emphatically. "If I were in your place! And who is this old tyrant? And who is the lucky man who will get the money instead of you?"

I felt reluctant to give names, but Mr. Fairfax had fastened on the story, and was full of curiosity.

"My friend is called Sutherland," I admitted at last, "and I know nothing of the other except the facts I have told you; and that he bears the family name."

"Sutherland!" echoed Mr. Fairfax, "Sutherland!" He turned red, then white, then green in the face. "Sutherland!" He looked like a man who was going to have a fit.

"Yes," I said, "Sutherland. Good Heavens! Mr. Fairfax, what is the matter with you?"

He recovered himself quickly. "Matter with me?" he said. "Nothing is the matter with me. But I once knew a man called Sutherland. It must have been the same. Poor Sutherland! poor Sutherland! He was a married man."

Almost immediately after this he left me abruptly upon "business."

Some days afterwards I went into the cottage, and found an unusual scene going on among the sisters.

"I am sure," Kitty was saying, "it is very strange of you not to be more pleased. The expense of me will be quite off your hands, and, besides, I shall be such a credit to the family."

Kitty, standing in the middle of the floor, thus harangued her two sisters, who were clinging together on Fan's little couch. Tears were rolling heavily down Gretchen's face. Fan had her lips pressed to the elder sister's hand, while she looked wistfully and reproachfully at the other.

"Now look you here, brother Ned," said Kitty, triumphantly, as if glad to see a reasonable being to whom she could state her case. "Here is Gretchen fretting and crying about the finest piece of luck that ever befel this miserable house. Lady Bernard wants to adopt me, and take me for her daughter. There never was such good fortune heard of except in the fairy tales."

"Wait a little, Kitty," I said, "Gretchen will get used to it. This is a very great blessing, and nobody ought to object to it."

Gretchen looked at me, and her tears came down afresh.

"There's the way she goes on," cried Kitty, tossing her head impatiently. "It is jealous and unkind of her, that's what I think."

"Oh, no, no, Kitty!" murmured Gretchen.

"Go away, Kitty. Go off to Lady Bernard," cried Fan. "And Gretchen, you have still got little me. Don't cry, lovely sweet! Never fear but I will stick to you."

The little creature meant it. She thought nothing of the long parting that was at hand.

"I shall often come to see you," said Kitty, a little touched, "and I shall be able to bring some nice things for Fan, I dare say. It would be a dreadful pity to miss such a good thing for the family."

The good thing was not missed. Kitty went to live with Lady Bernard, and her visits to the shabby cottage were few and far between. And Gretchen bravely put away her sorrow, for Fan was going to die, and it needed all Gretchen's courage to help the little sister through this strait. It took all her nerve, and the nerve of one who was stronger, and ought to have been braver than herself. Many a night we sat up, holding the little hands, and wetting the parched lips. Fan made a generous will, and left me to Gretchen, and left Gretchen to me. "Kitty will be sure to be all right," she said. "She always told us she would make a shift for herself."

Kitty had made a very good shift indeed. Sometimes she came to us, dressed in handsome clothes, and bringing grapes or wine, or some other delicacy. But her visits were rare, and she thought more of the things she brought than of noting the changes in Fan. I think she would have come oftener, only she did not like to appear to us without gifts in her hands. She was too elegant a young lady for us now. Her silk dress was easily hurt, and her delicate kid gloves would not readily come off. She had never more than ten minutes to stay at a time, for the carriage was always waiting for her to drive her with Lady Bernard to the park. She grew tall and sleek in the course of a few months, and looked very fair and lovely in her handsome clothes. I could not but own, when I saw her beside Gretchen, that a gem is all the more beautiful for being

richly set. Yet my chosen love in her threadbare gown was all the dearer and holier to me for this thought.

It was agonising, that parting between the two little sisters. Fan held on to Gretchen while the death-struggle was rending her, till the frail spirit was overcome and borne away, and only pulseless hands were found clasping Gretchen's neck. And then we laid her out, and put lilies on her breast, and Kitty came to see her and cried a good deal. The father was not at home, and we quite forgot to miss him. Before the day of burial we had wondered about him a little. A whole week passed and we did not see him or hear from him. Gretchen was troubled, thinking of the shock that was in store for him. I was not uneasy. I thought that, like Kitty, he would be sure to make a shift for himself.

We laid our dead in a very humble grave, and Kitty dried her tears and went back to Lady Bernard. It was a comfort to her, she said, to remember about the grapes which she had been able to bring. Gretchen's cheeks were white, and her strength was worn out, but she thought she had done nothing for little Fan.

So Gretchen was left alone; for her father did not come back. Weeks passed away, and still there were no tidings of him. For the comfort of his daughter I searched and advertised—made every effort within my power to get a trace of the missing man. All exertions were fruitless. Mr. Fairfax was either dead, or had deserted. Gretchen believed the former; I, the latter.

In the midst of this perplexity Kitty went abroad with Lady Bernard. It was uncertain when she might return, as her protectress had some idea of settling in France. Her sister was married there, and lived in a pretty old château with a family of lively French children about her. Kitty was full of pleasant anticipations, and could scarcely tear herself away from her own delightful thoughts to remember Gretchen's loneliness and needs. But she promised to write frequently, and what more could one expect?

It was also at this time that I heard the news of my guardian's death. He had died, as he had expected, suddenly, of a fit of apoplexy. The arrangements as to his will had not been made too soon. To me

had been left the sum of fifty pounds, to take me to Paris, where he knew I had long wished to study art. And Henry Sutherland—the “other one”—was his heir.

This man was truly the heir, for he had suddenly appeared, and was just in good time to claim his inheritance, being, fortunately for himself, unmarried, and totally unencumbered. He had turned up, in the oddest way, just before the late Mr. Sutherland's death, and had visited the deceased, and been recognised by him. So he was the lucky man; and this was the end of our little day-dream.

The white-headed butler gave me these details when I called at the door to inquire about the funeral. I was too much disappointed to enter the place, or to run the risk of meeting the new Mr. Sutherland.

“A fine figgur of a gen'lman he is, sir,” said the old man. “Hextremely ‘an’some, if it warn’t for too ‘igh a blush about the nose. Lucky for him, sir, as how he never tried matrimony!”

“That’s as may be,” I said, sagely. But I sighed a little as I walked down the steps. The sigh was more for Gretchen's sake than my own.

And now came the question of what Gretchen was to do with herself. We looked in each other's faces and knew we dared not marry. We made our little plan, and agreed to be as cheerful as we could in carrying it out. I was to go to Paris, and Gretchen was to wait patiently till such time as I could come back and begin life as an artist. I found her a home with a respectable and kindly woman, and she returned to her work in Mr. Jackson's room.

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